

20 years, TED STEVENS has truly given of his time and shared his great knowledge and expertise to help me to represent the citizens of our State. He has selflessly given guidance and counsel to help our delegation reach a common accord on what is best for Alaskans. And I can't personally thank him enough for his many kindness. We have truly worked together to help our small State, one that sports just three electoral votes, have a voice in the direction of our Nation. It has not always been easy.

We have had to battle those who have no knowledge of what life is truly like in Alaska, whether we are trying to save our timber industry in Southeast Alaska, or trying to protect our rights to access our natural resources—Alaska's main means of supporting our citizens and our State government. We are working together to win the right to produce oil, without environmental damage, from North America's last great storehouse of energy—the Arctic coastal plain.

While TED served eight years as assistant Republican leader (whip) handling key national issues, especially defense matters, he has been willing to put aside personal ambition for the good of his State. Many forget that TED sacrificed his seniority on the Commerce Committee to move to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee during the key fight over the Alaska lands act. He then moved back to Commerce to represent Alaska fishermen—proof positive that TED always puts Alaska first. During his years on the Appropriations Committee, he has battled hard to make sure Alaska receives its fair share of Federal funding—money needed to help Alaska provide basic services to its citizens—pipelined water and sanitary sewers, roads and schools that Americans elsewhere take for granted.

Today I, join with all Alaskans, to thank him for his skill, drive, and dedication and congratulate him on the honor he will justly receive this weekend. I also offer him a heart-felt wish for many, many more years of service to the State and the Nation. Nancy joins me in congratulations to both TED and Catherine on this honor. It's been a great privilege working with you my friend.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate my friend and colleague, TED STEVENS, on being named Alaskan of the Century. From his efforts to achieve Alaskan statehood to his work on behalf of the State of Alaska, TED STEVENS has dedicated his life to public service and proven his leadership both in his home state and in the United States Senate. I know of no one more deserving of this honor. I am proud to have the opportunity to know and work with him and I extend him my heartfelt congratulations on this momentous occasion.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the following exceptions: The first 60 minutes under the control of Senator DURBIN or his designee, the second 60 minutes under the control of Senator CRAIG or his designee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Surely.

Mr. DURBIN. My intention is to speak for 10 minutes, and then I will be happy to exchange time, whatever is appropriate under the rules, so the Senator from Alaska can have his 15 minutes at that point.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that pending the statement by my good friend, Senator DURBIN, I be recognized for 15 minutes. I intend to enlighten my colleagues on the facts and fiction of ANWR, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, an issue coming up in the budget and an issue coming up in a legislative package we are proposing. I thank my friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak in morning business for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, just in case there is a session tomorrow, I ask unanimous consent I be excused from any rollcalls until Monday, next Monday morning.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FITZGERALD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alaska.

GUNS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, hardly a day goes by that we do not hear of another tragic shooting across America. The latest news from Texas is still sketchy, but the results are horrible: Four people who apparently were injured by gunfire in a church and the assailant taking his own life with a gun. It is a constant reminder. Only 2 or 3 weeks ago, a Michigan first grader took a loaded handgun to school and killed his little classmate. That is America today, a nation of some 300 million weapons.

On Capitol Hill, the debate over guns and their future really gets pretty heated and inflammatory on both sides, and the parties are at it. Frankly, as I travel across the State of Illinois and I talk with people from other

States, I believe the families in this country get it. They understand what this is all about. They appreciate what we can and cannot do to make things better.

They do not believe for a second that we can pass a law that will end gun violence in America. That is beyond us. I wish we could. I do believe there are things we can do to make America a safer place.

Some want to argue between the possibilities of increased enforcement of current laws and closing loopholes which allow people to get guns who should not have them. That is a false choice. This Senator wants both. The people who misuse guns should be prosecuted and imprisoned, no questions asked. By the same token, we should do everything in our power to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, people with a history of violent mental illness, and children. I think we need both—zero tolerance and zero loopholes. I do not think it is a choice. We need both. If we go after both in an aggressive bipartisan approach, we can start to see the numbers come down on gun violence; we can have a little more peace of mind about our kids going to school and coming home safe and sound at the end of the day.

Last year, we had a bill on the floor of the Senate after the Columbine massacre which focused on two major points: If you buy a gun at a gun store in America, they do a background check. They will figure out whether or not you can legally own a gun. That is the Brady law. The Brady law has been successful.

It is hard to believe, but true, that people with a history of committing crimes and felonies, people who have outstanding arrest warrants—not very bright, I might add—show up at gun stores trying to buy guns. We do not want that to happen. We want to stop them.

There is a role there for the Federal Government in having this law. There is a bigger role for State and local law enforcement in making sure those people who have outstanding arrest warrants, for example, are prosecuted. That is what happens when you go to a gun store.

We also know in America one can buy guns at gun shows. There is a loophole there: There is no background check. If you happen to have a problem under the law—let's say a felony record or perhaps a history of mental illness or you are too young—you do not go to the gun store where they enforce the law, you go to the gun show where they do not. That is the loophole we want to close. That was in the law that was passed last year in the Senate. The vote was 49-49, incidentally. Vice President GORE cast the deciding vote. We sent the bill over to the House where it has languished for almost a year. Nothing has happened.

The second thing that was in that law, which I think most Americans would agree is common sense, was: Is